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ABSTRACT

A community survey was undertaken to assess public opinion on five educational issues: (1) teacher recruitment, preparation and certification; (2) professional career ladders and master teacher roles; (3) school staff development; (4) merit salary increases; and (5) teacher image. Respondents (142) included businesses and residences with and without school-aged children. Overall community response to the survey's assertions about changes in teacher recruitment, preparation and certification, career ladders and master teachers, school staff development, merit pay and teacher image were in general very positive. Responses seemed most favorable with respect to teacher recruitment, career ladders and master teachers, staff development, and, in a more limited way, merit pay proposals. Least favorable response was with respect to teacher preparation, certification, and image. Data on responses to questionnaire statements are presented on tables. Brief analyses are presented on the responses. (JD)

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The Project to Design Teacher Incentive Structures
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INCENTIVES FOR TEACHING:
A Survey of Community Perceptions and Support

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James R. Gress
The University of Toledo

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The Project to Design Teacher Incentive Structures is a collaborative study and planning project. Project participants include professional staff of Maumee City Schools, St. Joseph and St. Patrick's Schools and the Catholic Diocese of Toledo, community residents, and The University of Toledo.

A survey of the Maumee community was undertaken to assess opinion with respect to five study and planning areas. The five areas are: (1) teacher recruitment, preparation and certification, (2) professional career ladders and master teacher role, (3) school staff development, (4) merit salary incentives and (5) teacher image. The areas parallel work of five Project task forces.

Survey Design

An instrument to survey community opinion was drafted by Project staff based on review of teacher incentive literature.* Discussion of the draft instrument by members of the Project's Steering Committee resulted in a six-part questionnaire, five parts each with a minimum number of items with a Likert response scale for the respective areas of Project study and a final part for respondent demographics.

Sample and Response. A directory listing names and addresses of 6,916 residences and businesses in the Maumee community was used to select a random sample for the survey. However, the sample did exclude residential listings which identified a household member as a professional educator employed by any school system. In each such case, the next residential listing was selected instead.

The sample of 1009 (14.8% of the population) residences and businesses included the following:

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*See Selected Publications, "Improving Educational Quality in Maumee City Schools: The Project to Design Teacher Incentive Structures."

	N	%
Residences with School-age Children	605	60
Residences without School-age Children	252	25
Businesses	152	15
	1,009	100

A total of 142 usable returns (14.7% of the sample) included the following:

	N	%
Residences with School-age Children	49	34
Residences without School-age Children	69	49
Businesses	24	17
	142	100

Thus, respondents included both a proportionate number of sample businesses but, among residences, a disproportionately greater number of those without school-age children.

Other Respondent Demographics. Table 1 summarizes demographic data. Respondents included nearly equal numbers of males and females distributed over an age range from 18-21 to over 75. 68.9% were 26-45 years old. Half the respondents, both resident and business, had been in the community over fifteen years.

Respondents included residents with school-age children at all Maumee City and both Catholic schools, both current and past students.

Findings

Table 1 also summarizes overall support, both in principle and with tax increases, to seven proposals as follows:

Proposal	Yes, the schools should	Yes, increase taxes to support
Establish career ladders	82.4%	56.3%
Identify master teachers	78.2	57.4
Make certification exceptions	52.1	38.7
Recruit exceptional teacher candidates	88.0	60.6
Expand staff development	82.4	53.5
Adopt merit pay	69.0	55.6
Budget public relations	62.0	37.3

Recruitment, Preparation and Certification. Except for proposals to bypass traditional teacher preparation and certification routes, about 75% of respondents agreed with proposals for change. 73% felt (30% strongly so) teacher education colleges should be more selective; 22% did not. 9% expressed no opinion about certification exceptions, 4% about college selectivity. (See Table 2).

Almost 80% believed more financial support is needed for teacher preparation. Only 48% agreed to let passing national exams substitute for college preparation.

58% of respondents agreed to a need for making exceptions to present certification requirements to bring needed skills into schools. 80% agreed to eliminating permanent certificates in favor of periodic renewals throughout a teacher's career.

Respondents agreed with requiring a state exam for certification. Agreement varied from 77 to 90% with respect to examining interpersonal skills, organization and planning, professional competencies, basic skills and subject proficiency.

Career Ladder. Respondents were in strong agreement that recognition for teachers should vary with respect to identified criteria. Agreement was 90, 80, 77, 70 and 60%, respectively, for recognition for demonstrated excellence in teaching skills, significant student achievement, superior subject-matter knowledge, peer respect and length of service. Strong agreement varied similarly for these criteria. In addition, 15 and 10% of respondents expressed no opinion or gave no response with respect to length of service and peer respect; only 3% gave those responses with respect to the other identified criteria. (See Table 3.)

Agreement about the responsibilities of a master teacher varied among respondents. 82% of respondents agreed that master teachers should develop curriculum; 78% agreed they should design teacher education. 63% agreed master teachers should work with gifted and talented students. However, only 57% agreed they should evaluate peer performance, and only 54% agreed they should conduct research. 15% expressed no opinion or gave no response with respect to conducting research.

Staff Development. Over 95% of respondents agreed that school policies should support professional growth and development of staff. 81% recognized a need for support programs for beginning teachers. 78% agreed that curriculum development is every teacher's responsibility. (See Table 4.)

More than three-fourths of respondents believed teachers should participate in the training of those coming into the profession. However, almost 15% disagreed, and 9% either expressed no opinion or gave no response, both high frequencies of these latter responses.

Least positive responses were given to the proposition that school staff development should relate to personal development. Slightly more than two-thirds agreed, but 15% disagreed and almost 17% expressed no opinion or gave no response.

With respect to the design of staff development, principles of the teacher participants' involvement in planning and active learning were recognized by almost 95% of respondents. Need for staff development focuses on improving teaching skills and student learning objectives was seen by almost 90%. 80% recognized need for focus on individual teacher objectives as well. 85% of respondents agreed with need for teachers to visit other schools. Over 80% acknowledged the importance of time.

Largest disagreements were 20%, respectively, who did not recognize the importance of individual teacher objectives or time in staff development.

Merit Pay. Half to two-thirds of respondents agreed that merit pay would attract more highly qualified teachers (67%), increase teaching quality (66%), keep competent teachers in and incompetent out (58%) and improve student learning (55%). Greatest frequency of no opinion and no response (20%) was in response to the improvement of student learning.

One-fourth of respondents felt merit pay would undermine staff morale. 62% disagreed. (See Table 5.)

Agreement with identified criteria for merit pay ranged from 28 to 69%. Greatest agreement was expressed for student achievement (69%) and for teachers' completion of advanced study (61%). Roughly a majority agreement was expressed for subject-matter knowledge (52%) and student evaluation of teaching (48%) as merit criteria. Over one-third of respondents agreed criteria should include parent (40%) and administrator (36%) evaluations. 28% agreed to peer evaluation. Strongest disagreement was expressed for evaluation by peers (15%), administrators (12%) and parents (11%). Greatest ambiguity was expressed for administrators' evaluation (over 40% of respondents).

85% or more of respondents recognized the importance of school board commitment, focus on student learning, staff involvement in planning, equal availability, definition of superior performance, objective assessment, workable administration and adequate funding in any merit pay plan.

The Image of Teachers. Two-thirds or more respondents would favor a son or daughter's becoming a teacher. However, 35% expressed no opinion or gave no response. Two-thirds felt that working conditions in schools are acceptable; 15% expressed no opinion or gave no response. 60% felt they knew what was happening in schools although 80% saw need for more school collaboration with parents, community businesses and others. (See Table 6.)

More than three-fourths of respondents agreed that schools must advertise their achievements due to the increased numbers of taxpayers without schoolage children. 45% agreed that education, in general, needs to invest in advertising, and half thought advertising student achievement would improve teacher image. About 15% of respondents expressed no opinion or gave no response regarding advertising.

Conclusions

Overall community response to the survey's assertions about change in teacher recruitment, preparation and certification, career ladder and master teacher, school staff development, merit pay and teacher image was generally very positive. The positive response may be surprising, given the disproportionate number of survey respondents who were community residents without school-aged children. The overall positive response may also prompt particular attention to the few less positive individual responses.

Overall response seems most favorable with respect to teacher recruitment, career ladder and master teacher, staff development, and, perhaps, merit pay proposals. Overall response is least favorable with respect to teacher preparation and certification and teacher image proposals although there is a good deal of ambiguity in responses as well.

Community respondents were relatively hesitant to go along with changes in traditional teacher education and certification, perhaps a signal that, for all their apparent weaknesses, these institutional arrangements still enjoy public confidence. Respondents recognized need for greater financial support for, and greater selectivity in, teacher education. However, respondents seemed also to recognize the limitations of both money and selectivity alone.

Survey respondents clearly support differentiated recognition for teachers,

especially based on excellence in teaching, student achievement and subject expertise. They were less enthusiastic about length of service or peer respect as criteria. Community respondents agreed that teachers need to be involved in curriculum development and preservice teacher education.

The community respondents supported a variety of staff development programs which are related to identified role responsibilities in a career ladder model. Respondents didn't seem to appreciate that staff development may be related directly to personal growth and development.

Perhaps surprisingly, respondents thought merit pay would have a variety of beneficial effects on teaching and learning in schools. More surprisingly, almost two-thirds apparently didn't believe merit pay would undermine staff morale. Community respondents agreed with the importance of all of the ingredients for an effective merit pay plan identified. However, least certainty was related to administrator and parent evaluations of teachers.

There also was a good bit of uncertainty in community response to the use of public relations in professional education. Community respondents identified need for greater school-community interaction, and they agreed that focus on school and student achievements would enhance the image of teachers. However, their responses evidenced reluctance for professionals' or schools' budgeting advertising. Perhaps the mix of responses itself suggests a need for more direct and more effective professional advertising.

TABLE 1
Respondent Demographics

Age:	Under 18	0.0%	26-35	23.9%	66-75	3.5%
	18-21	6.3	36-45	21.1	Over 75	2.1
	22-25	6.3	46-45	23.9	NR	1.4
			56-65	11.3		

Sex:	Male	52.1%	Female	45.1%	NR	2.8%

Length of Residence:	0-5 years	14.1%	16-25 years	23.9%
	6-10	20.4	Over 25	25.4
	11-15	15.5	NR	0.7

Residents' Number of School-Age Children (% Respondents):

	0	1	2		0	1	2
Fairfield	93.7	2.1	3.5	Maumee HS	83.1	12.0	3.5
Ft. Miami	95.1	2.1	1.4	St. Joseph's	97.0	1.4	1.6
Union	95.1	4.2	0.7	St. Patrick's	96.5	2.1	1.4
Wayne Trail	93.7	3.5	2.1	Other	95.8	2.8	2.4
Gateway	89.4	9.2	0.7				

Residents' Number of Children Attending Maumee Schools in the Past (%):

0	50.0	3	7.7	7	0.7
1	6.3	4	7.0	8	1.4
4	20.4	5	3.5	NR	0.9
		6	2.1		

Residents' Number of Children Under School-Age (%):

0	85.9	1	7.7	2	4.9	3	0.7	NR	0.8

Businesses' Number of Employees:

0-6	4.2%	26-30	2.1%	Over 100	2.1%
6-10	3.5	31-50	0.1	NR	83.1
11-25	4.2	51-100	0.7		

All-Should Maumee Schools (% Respondents):	Yes	No	NR	Increase Taxes to Support Same? Yes	No	NR
Establish a career ladder.	82.4	8.5	9.2	56.3	24.6	19.0
Identify "master teachers."	78.2	14.1	7.7	51.4	29.6	19.0
Support teacher certification exceptions.	52.1	37.3	10.6	38.7	40.8	20.4
Recruit exceptional teacher candidates.	88.0	5.6	6.3	60.6	22.5	16.9
Expand staff development programs.	82.4	7.7	9.9	53.5	26.8	19.7
Adopt "merit pay" plans for teachers.	69.0	20.4	10.6	55.6	26.8	17.6
Include public/community relations activities in their budgets.	62.0	26.8	11.3	37.3	43.7	19.0

TABLE 3
Career Ladder and Master Teacher Role

Master Teacher Responsibilities Should Include:	% RESPONSE SA	A	D	SD	NO	NR
Designing teacher training programs.	2'.1	57.0	7.0	2.1	5.6	7.0
Teaching talented and gifted.	16.2	47.2	24.6	2.1	6.3	3.5
Developing curriculum.	20.4	62.0	7.7	7.7	2.1	--
Conducting school research.	7.7	46.5	26.8	3.5	13.4	2.1
Evaluating the performance of other teachers.	15.5	41.5	30.3	2.1	7.0	3.5
Teachers Should Receive Special Recognition for:						
Lengthy service to the schools.	15.5	44.4	21.1	4.9	8.5	5.6
Demonstration of superior knowledge of a subject.	20.4	57.0	15.5	4.2	2.8	--
Demonstration of excellence in teaching skills.	46.5	43.7	6.3	1.4	2.1	--
Commanding unusual respect from peers.	21.1	48.6	18.3	0.7	7.7	3.5
Significant student achievement.	38.0	41.5	14.8	0.7	2.8	2.1

TABLE 5
Merit Salary

The Competition Sparked by Merit Pay Would:	% RESPONSE SA	A	D	SD	NO	NR
Undermine school staff morale.	7.7	17.6	45.8	16.2	7.7	4.9
Improve student learning.	9.2	45.8	20.4	4.9	14.1	5.6
Attract more highly qualified teachers.	28.9	38.0	17.6	4.9	6.3	4.2
Keep competent in and incompetent out.	20.4	38.0	24.6	7.0	5.6	4.2
Raise the general level of teaching.	23.2	42.3	16.9	4.2	7.7	5.6
Merit ay Plan Should Be Based On:						
Administrator's evaluation.	4.2	31.7	23.2	12.0	8.5	20.4
Subject matter knowledge.	8.5	43.0	30.3	8.5	7.0	2.8
Classroom performance (evaluated by another teacher).	3.5	24.6	44.4	14.8	7.7	4.9
Student achievement.	28.2	40.8	18.3	4.9	4.9	2.8
Students' evaluation.	9.9	38.0	31.0	8.5	7.7	4.9
Completion of advanced study.	7.0	54.2	21.1	6.3	7.0	4.2
Evaluation by parents.	9.9	29.6	39.4	11.3	7.0	2.8
Merit Pay Plan Should Include:						
Workable administrative arrangements.	20.4	63.4	3.5	1.4	8.5	2.8
Board of education commitment.	28.9	55.6	4.9	1.4	4.9	4.2
Staff involvement in development.	29.6	57.0	4.9	2.1	3.5	2.8
Adequate funding.	27.5	61.3	0.7	2.1	5.6	2.8
Availability to all who may qualify.	33.1	59.2	0.7	1.4	2.1	3.5
Plausible definition of superior performance.	34.5	52.8	1.4	2.1	3.5	5.6
Objective and consistent assessment.	40.8	47.2	2.1	2.1	4.2	3.5
Promotion of increased student learning.	39.4	48.6	2.1	1.4	4.9	3.5

TABLE 6
Teacher Image

	% RESPONSE					
	SA	A	D	SD	NO	NR
There will be greater taxpayer support if teachers are paid according to performance.	21.1	45.1	22.5	2.8	7.0	1.4
I would favor my child's becoming a school teacher.	10.6	54.2	12.7	2.8	17.6	18.0
Ample opportunities exist to know what's happening in schools.	12.0	47.9	26.8	4.9	7.7	.7
Professional working conditions are acceptable.	12.7	56.3	14.1	1.4	14.1	1.4
Schools must advertise achievements due to increased numbers of taxpayers without school-age children.	23.2	54.2	12.0	1.4	7.7	1.4
Schools need cooperative projects with businesses, parents and other community adults.	27.5	52.8	9.9	2.1	7.0	.7
Best way to improve image is to advertise student achievement (news, tapes...).	12.7	38.0	30.3	4.2	12.7	2.1
Education must invest in advertising.	8.5	36.6	31.0	9.2	13.4	1.4
Teacher schedule should include 3:00-5:30 for appointments and non-class activities.	23.2	34.5	21.1	7.7	9.2	4.2